



THE PROTAGONISM OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES **Core Guideline for the Studies and Researches of the CSEM**

This document¹ aims to present CSEM's Core Guideline Program for the Studies and Researches.

During the years of 2015 to 2017, the CSEM team took part in a series of meetings about methodological reflection² that allowed new interpretative readings of the Center's historical journey, reflection and systematization of the experiences and knowledge acquired during its recent trajectory, especially in the last 10 years. The activities records, knowledge and aspirations of the CSEM throughout its 30 years of operation³ provided key elements for the formulation and planning of performance strategies and represented a basis for methodological and institutional qualification for its Program of Studies and Researches.

The main result from this process consists in the recognition of the **PROTAGONISM OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES** as a Core Guideline of Studies and Researches of the CSEM. The choice is the outcome of a diachronic process of collective reflection that started being adopted by the Center as a guiding principle for its programs in the medium and long term. Under the above-mentioned title, on one hand, the connection between scientific knowledge produced by the Center and the commitment with the Scalabrinian charisma can be highlighted, considering that the theological, sociopastoral and scientific/academic approaches are complementary, which also characterizes the choice for interdisciplinarity and dialogue with other areas and forms of knowledge. On the other hand, the adoption of the perspectives of dignity and life defense for migrants and refugees in studies and publications are consolidated, a bias through which the CSEM identity is defined.

Concepts and reflections that highlight the agency of subjects in mobility are included: its capacity and potential to act, influence and transform facts and meanings, as well as being resilient before challenging situations and exercising their autonomy to make decisions for themselves and their families, engaging in the processes of the societies in which they insert themselves due to the migration fact or the seeking of refuge. This collection of concepts and categories translates the methodological and content choices made for the studies and researches of the CSEM, which are anchored in human rights and the promotion and defense of life and human dignity of subjects in situation of mobility.

Even though the construction of the theme Core Guideline has been conceived specifically for the Program of Studies and Research, it has become a guideline that influences all the other programs of the CSEM transversally, as a way of articulating and integrating different theme and strategic axes of the Center, such as: events, publications, consultations, among other activities. In this regard, the Core Guideline

¹ This text was conceived in 2018 and is the result of a collective construction of the Studies and Researches Team of the CSEM, composed by: Carmen Lussi, Igor Cunha, Luiza Giovanna Moura, Roberto Marinucci and Tufla Botega (coordinator of the Program), and advisor Pedro Russi.

² Meetings conducted by external advisor Pedro Russi.

³ The CSEM started its activities in March 25, 1988.

also takes on, in a certain way, the role of constituting itself as a guiding principle to qualify the processes of decision-making and the capacity for dialogue and influence, with regards to the interlocutors and partners the CSEM has and might have in future by fulfilling its mission national and internationally. The Core Guideline allows the CSEM to characterize its own identity and establish its epistemological and institutional ground alongside the stakeholders with whom it dialogues.

It is not about taking on a closed-off program, nor about rendering the processes of planning and performance of the Center inflexible; it is about adopting an institutional definition that guides the internal and external appointments that the CSEM takes in, and that allows for interlinking the various activities and programs the Center will play.

The Core Guideline is also an important tool to avoid thematic and activities dispersion, favoring, in such a way, the optimization of efforts and investments with regards to human and financial resources. In this respect, the adoption of the Core Guideline contributes to greater specificity, and favors the accuracy and quality of the processes and results that the Center proposes itself to achieve before the plethora of possibilities that migration studies encompass, in addition to favoring the continuity in time and study of a theme of interest, which implies constant effort in seeking for greater specialization and qualification.

Therefore, the adoption of the **PROTAGONISM OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES** as Core Guideline allows the CSEM to take the next step towards its institutional objective of *being a Scalabrinian center for Studies considered an international reference about the migratory theme.*

THE CORE GUIDELINE

Considering the performance records of the CSEM – including the purposes of its creation insofar as Center for Congregational Studies and the activities performed throughout its journey – and the opportunity to qualify its dialogue with the academia, the Church and society, the definition of the Core Guideline sets itself as a qualitative systematization, in line with the CSEM mission and in compliance with the goals established in the Strategic Plan for the 2016-2018 triennial.

To synthesize its institutional, conceptual and semantic reflections carried out around the Core Guideline for the Program of Studies and Researches of the CSEM, the terms that best translate the comprehension, in an abbreviated manner, is the **PROTAGONISM OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES**. This title follows conceptually and strategically the institutional choice that rules the CSEM, which is the Charisma of the Scalabrinian Missionary Sisters congregation (MSCS), that has in migrants and refugees its focus of action and interest, preferably the poorest and the ones in situation of greater vulnerability.

It is a two-way street, in which the CSEM on one hand reinforces the Charisma of the congregation, its very own expression, and on the other hand, resorts the MSCS Sisters performance to carry out its actions recognizing and empowering the history, journey, knowledge, voice and subjectivity of migrants and refugees. This process, in addition to qualifying the achievement of the CSEM mission, seeks to consolidate the international articulation of the congregation network performance in its mission alongside migrants and refugees.

Key-concepts for the Core Guideline

THE PROTAGONISM OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES	Protagonism
	Agency
	Migrant as subject/actor
	Autonomy
	Resilience

This collection of concepts and categories translates the methodological and content choices for the studies and researches of the CSEM in such a way that the Core Guideline is anchored in the promotion and defense of life and human dignity of subjects in situation of mobility, highlighting their capacity for resilience, resistance and influence in their own processes, events and meanings of the historical processes of other actors involved in a micro and macrostructural level.

It establishes, in this regard, an institutional guideline that recognizes migration as an essentially human – positive – phenomenon, and diversity as wealth; and in addition, assumes an ethical attitude towards the study and research of migrations and refuge, in which the subjects in situation of mobility are not merely regarded as objects of research or mere informants. The Core Guideline also sets an institutional commitment in such way that the studies and researches of CSEM reflect migration as a phenomenon in which migrants and refugees are **protagonists** subjects, vital actors, real people that interact, bring meaning and participate with decision-making power in their own processes of life and migration projects.

From this perspective, the Core Guideline recognizes the **capacity of agency** when migrants and refugees have to make independent choices as **autonomous** subjects, to act or not to act before a given specific situation; of being “agents of change”, of influence and creativity. The usage of this concept in the Core Guideline allows the CSEM to align its processes of analysis and knowledge production with a proactive perspective of the migration phenomenon, recognizing the capacity of agency of individuals faced with the most adverse scenarios, highlighting displacement as a flexible and strategic resource that people recur to, and emphasizing creativity and human capacity of adapting when using migration as a means to recreate their everyday life and rebuild their lives before the newly-acquired challenges.

In this respect, the CSEM’s studies and researches, based on this Core Guideline, begin to prioritize the refugee and migrant figures not only as persons who are subject and trapped to external determinations, but as a **resilient subject/actor**, with capacity to interfere in the social determinant, to adapt and contribute to the production of a society of which they are also products. This outlook allows for a broader approach, more sensitive and conscious of the complexity that involves the recognition of the migrant and refugee subject in interaction with the environment, going frequently against xenophobic approaches, facing the challenge of raising awareness and promoting the human dignity of migrant and refugees in all aspects.

Based on the above-mentioned concepts, the Core Guideline is tuned with the institutional option for an interdisciplinary approach, which dialogues with different areas of knowledge – psychology, sociology, anthropology, theology, among others – as to contribute to the production of knowledge on the migration theme ‘from a self-perspective that focuses on the person in mobility (migrant/refugee/other categories) insofar as subject of rights, a stakeholder that acts and contributes actively to the construction of its own history, not merely a victim of macroprocesses, but an active

part of events and an effective participant of the reading and interpretation of meanings of events attributed to them. The CSEM, based on its Core Guideline, thereby seeks to highlight the dignity of people in mobility and their rights, their subjectivity, autonomy, capacity, resilience, vulnerabilities, difficulties, strategies of survival, competencies, self-determination, dreams and fears, heartaches and accomplishments, visions and efforts, losses and profits, but above all: their **protagonism**.